Pat Sheehan

Gorgeous, Adventurous, Fascinating

Pat Sheehan

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My infatuation with 1950s-era Hollywood began after I discovered that my aunt was a personality in Hollywood. Her name was Pat Sheehan, but would later be known as Pat Crosby. She's noted for her vast array of pinups, awards in pageants, and walk-on roles in movies like *Kismet* (1955) and *Gigi* (1958), but this 5'6" blonde had an adventurous life that included mingling with stars like Barbara Eden, Angie Dickinson, and Milton Berle, and romances with millionaires and celebrities. She was perhaps the most gorgeous woman in Hollywood, which helped her achieve fame throughout the 1950s.

Patricia Ann Sheehan was born on September 7, 1931, in San Francisco. Her father was an inventor and businessman named Arthur Sheehan and her mother was Gladys Larson. She was raised in an affluent household that included two brothers, Arthur and Edward, with the former being a recipient of the Purple Heart, Air Medal, and Oak Cluster and the latter being a minister who taught the principles of Christianity across the country. Pat was "an ugly duckling," according to one of her classmates, but she blossomed into a gorgeous blonde while at Galileo High School. She worked at Fisherman's Wharf before being crowned Miss Milkmaid in October 1949 and Miss San Francisco on May 15, 1950. She was subsequently hired as a spokesmodel with Pan American Airways and appeared in their advertisements.

After a meeting at the Paramount Theater, she began a relationship with Bing Crosby. She accompanied him to several events. He was infatuated with her, but she felt that their age difference would be problematic. Much to Bing's dismay, on January 9, 1951, Pat wed George Duuglas, a handsome man who acted as an agent for various pseudo-celebrities. They had a son, Gregory.

Two years later, they divorced due to George's lack of motivation and her mother hating him. Pat resumed dating Bing. He eventually proposed to her, but she declined and would later tell a reporter that "there was too much of a difference in our ages to take our friendship seriously." I spoke with Bing's widow Kathryn Grant years ago, and she was very reserved about Bing's relationship with Pat. She wrote in her book My Life with Bing that "Pat was one of the warmest and friendliest women I've ever met." She also described a dinner she attended where Pat, "who never drank hard liquor, was being supplied with ginger ale... intoxicated with the attention she was receiving."

Pat Sheehan on Blondie, "The Other Woman" (January 25, 1957).

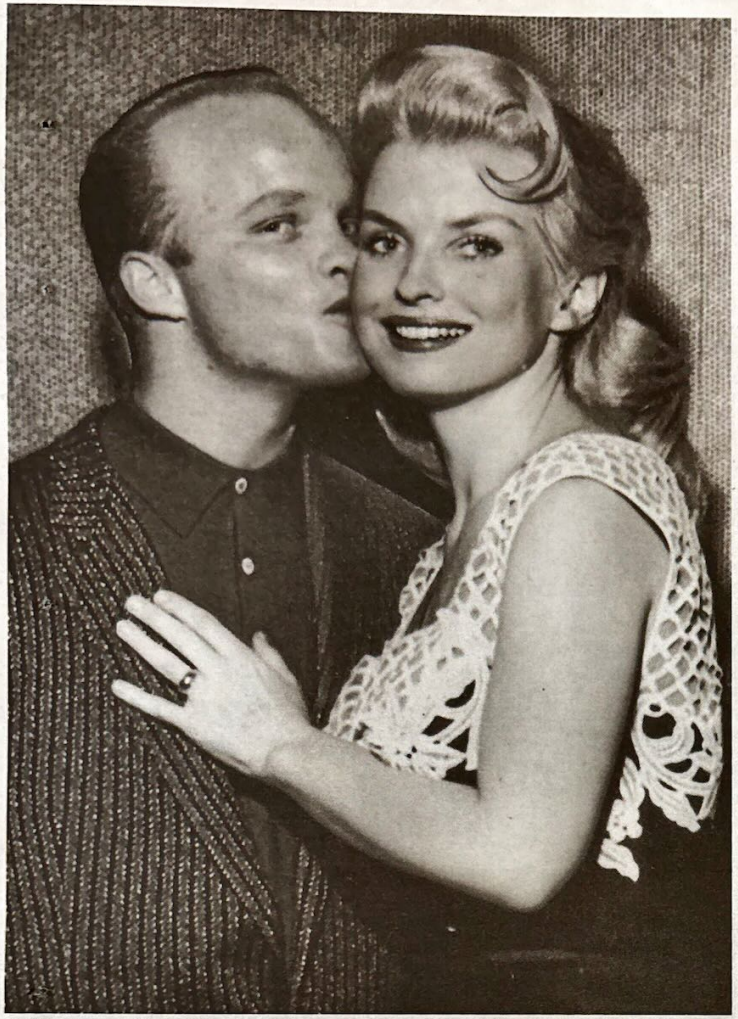
Pat Sheehan and Barbara Darrow in The French Line (1953).

(left to right) US Air Force General Curtis LeMay and Pat Sheehan with Sy Bartlett and Helen E. Maitland LeMay.

Pat's modeling career was steady, with gigs for Camel Cigarettes, Polaroid, and Ivory Soap that helped support her and her son Gregory. Flying to Hollywood in 1953, she met Howard Hughes. He offered to pay for a babysitter for her son so they could have dinner together, which she agreed to. Hughes sent a limousine and had the driver give her $1000 in crisp bills. She refused the gift, but still met with Hughes who was angry that Pat refused his gift. She said, "This was supposed to be a dinner, not a relationship." They became good friends, though, and he cast her in *The French Line* (1953) and *Son of Sinbad* (1955). They stayed in touch for decades, with Pat telling a reporter that "nobody will ever know all the nice things that he's done for people."

It was a good beginning to a lengthy career as an actress, and she continued to get roles in movies like *The Adventures of Hajji Baba* (1954) and *Daddy Long Legs* (1955). She can be seen in the latter film dining with Fred Astaire at the Hong Kong Cafe while Leslie Caron watches them.

Her role in *Kismet* (1955) was intended to be larger, but was greatly reduced because she stuttered on camera. It was said that her cast mate Tina Louise asked the director to keep Pat on. Tina would eventually leave the production herself, but Pat spent weeks on set and can be seen alongside Howard Keel during his duet with Dolores Gray. This was followed with a walk-on role in *Guys and Dolls* (1955), which was very lucrative for Pat because she was chosen



Pat Sheehan and Dennis Crosby.

Pat Sheehan and Rod Taylor at the Directors Guild Theater (August 19, 1970).

as one of six women to tour the country to promote the film. On the tour, she met Frank Sinatra and they'd occasionally date. He even purchased presents for her and her son during the holidays.

She left the tour early after getting cast in *Man with the Gun* (1955) where she appeared in several scenes alongside Angie Dickinson who apparently doesn't seem to remember her too well. This was disputed by Pat's boyfriend, Thomas Holbrook, who said that Pat introduced Angie to John F. Kennedy. Kennedy even pursued Pat, but after he grabbed her hips, he was rebuffed by Pat who said, "I don't do that, sir."

After demonstrating comedic ability in several episodes of the *Colgate Comedy Hour*, Pat was urged by Jerry Lewis to appear in the series finale. He and Dean Martin wrote a plum role for her where she demonstrated several products by Palmolive Soap. This episode was seen by NBC's Pat Weaver, who said, "Sign that girl!" On January 25, 1956, she was given a seven-year contract and became a sensation as 'Television's First Starlet." Her television credits include *Texaco Star Theater, Home, Truth or Consequences, Matinee Theater, The Bob Hope Show, The Chevy Show, People Are Funny, Salute to Baseball,* and *Inside Beverly Hills*.

Her best with the network was on the *NBC Comedy Hour*, where she appeared in every episode. Although the television series was canceled after a season, it gave Pat the opportunity to demonstrate her acting ability. Her stutter made it difficult to cast her, so the writers wrote a skit for her that was a parody of a 1920-era silent film. It's one of several episodes available at the Paley Center for Media to watch. There's another episode where she gets to speak with the writers, avoiding the use of "P" and "B" sounds so she wouldn't stutter. The network hired Agnes Moorehead to strengthen her acting ability. NBC's marketing of Pat as "The Blonde Rita Hayworth" and "The Marilyn Monroe of Television" was met with immense success.

On an episode of *Blondie*, entitled "The Other Woman," Pat played a librarian who is envied by Blondie (Pamela Britton). It was another role where she had no dialogue, but it was heavily publicized in newspapers across the country. The publicity wasn't limited to *Blondie*, though, as Pat was in magazines like TV Guide, People Today, Tempo, and Modern Man. There were plans to cast her in a game show alongside Juli Reding, but those plans fell through when the network informed Pat that her contract wouldn't be renewed. It wasn't a total loss, as Pat felt that she

learned a lot that year, saying, "You can learn a lot from comedians like Dean Martin and Jonathan Winters."

Leaving the network in January 1957, Pat flew to Las Vegas the following month after getting hired at the Tropicana Hotel as one of the showgirls. She made her onstage debut with them on April 4, 1957, with headliners like Eddie Fisher, Shecky Greene, and Jayne Mansfield. Shecky remembered Pat, saying, "She was crazy and had multiple personalities. I introduced her to Dennis [Crosby], which was a big mistake. They weren't good for one another. I remember her going steady with Rod Taylor... They'd argue and she'd telephone me to vent. I was fed up with it."

Pat's affair with Eddie Fisher has been well-documented in his book Been There, Done That. He was married at the time to Debbie Reynolds when he and Pat began their relationship. It lasted for months, and he even rented an apartment for her so they could be closer. He described Pat as "the shyest girl I've ever made love to" and said she left him after he refused to divorce Debbie, although Pat told friends he planned to divorce her until she got pregnant with Todd Fisher. Eddie pleaded for Pat's forgiveness years later, to no avail. Pat had another affair that year with Lee Hyatt, who'd later wed actresses Myrna Hansen and Elizabeth Logue.

In October 1957, Pat met Dennis Crosby, son of Bing Crosby, after being introduced to him at a restaurant by Shecky Greene. Months later, they married at the Gretna Green Wedding Chapel after a last-minute elopement. Pat had discovered she was pregnant and they wanted to avoid a scandal. There was a lot of controversy regarding their marriage as Dennis was sued days later by Marilyn Miller Scott because he fathered a child with her as well. The fact that Pat had dated Dennis' father in the past didn't help either and it led to magazines labeling her as one of "Dad's discards."

She and Dennis had two sons together, Dennis and Patrick, both of whom are now deceased. Pat quit the Tropicana Hotel and left modeling entirely—or so she thought.

Hugh Hefner purchased photographs of her that were taken two years prior and planned to publish them in Playboy where she'd be Playmate of the Month alongside Mara Corday. Pat would later say in The Playmate Book that "Bing wasn't thrilled," which was very true. Bing and Hefner argued until agreeing to a compromise that the photographs would be published without the Crosby surname being used.

The marriage ended on July 3, 1964. Pat's brother Edward said that Dennis would disappear for days and urinate on the furniture while drunk. It didn't slow Pat down, though. She spent evenings at nightclubs like The Daisy and The Luau while dating some of Hollywood's most eligible bachelors, including Gene Yusem, Elvis Presley, Omar Sharif, and Phillip Lambro. In his memoirs, Close Encounters of the Worst Kind, Lambro described a troubling incident where Pat was held at gunpoint in her bungalow by an obsessed admirer. Lambro would say that he parted ways with Pat after discovering that "this flawless beauty was taking drugs" and that she "didn't find my work as a composer very interesting." Pat's niece

Pat Sheehan on Texaco Star Theater, 1957.

Pat Sheehan as a model for Camel Cigarettes.

Pat Sheehan and Marlon Brando in Guys and Dolls (1955).

Pat Sheehan (right) in Kismet (1955) with Howard Keel.

Mayda Lynn once said that Pat's lifestyle was so chaotic that she frequently relied on her mother to babysit while she went out on her shenanigans.

It was 1967 that Pat began her turbulent affair with Rod Taylor. They had a very toxic and volatile relationship, but were in love. In her autobiography, Models, Murder, and Mayhem, Christina Rudas', who was dating Pat's son at the time, detailed evenings where Taylor would stop by and go out bar hopping with Pat. The reasons for their 1971 breakup are disputed. Pat's niece—and my mother— Teresa Sheehan said that Pat felt that Rod was unfaithful to her and she was humiliated by his foul language. Others say that Rod was tired of the bad behavior of Pat's son Dennis Crosby Jr., which included drugs, theft, and him allegedly being intimate with Rod Taylor's bisexual father. Although Rod eventually remarried, he always referred to Pat as "the one that got away." I tried getting in touch with his widow Carol, but my voicemails went unanswered.

Pat continued to defy the years with a flawless complexion, but she would wear gloves as her hands began exhibiting signs of aging. When accompanying her promiscuous son Dennis to binge-drinking parties, the other teenagers would ask, "Who's that hot older lady?" He'd say, "That's my mom." She dated Cantinflas, Jack Cassidy, Dean Paul Martin, and Gene

Simmons, and had friendships with Liza Minnelli and Gloria Haley, the daughter of Jack Haley. It was a great decade for her. Her other friends included stars like Dean Martin, Lucille Ball, Sam Fuller, and Sandra Giles. Pat never remarried despite her frequent dating, and once told her brother that "marriage is easy."

In the 1990s, her life began a downward spiral. She became an alcoholic and had a massive hemorrhage while walking at a nearby park, possibly a result from decades of using pills to keep herself slender. Although she made a full recovery, she became reclusive and didn't appear in public as much. In the early 2000s, she developed breast and uterine cancer, and despite being successfully treated she suffered heart failure due to the intensity of the treatments.

She died on January 14, 2006. She had been out of the spotlight for years, and despite obituaries in The Galileo Observer, Classic Images, and the Los Angeles Times, there wasn't much remembrance of her career until recently. One of her classmates, Sisvan Der Harootunian, posthumously inducted her into the Galileo Hall of Merit in 2019, and I published a book titled Top Models on March 31, 2023, which has several pages dedicated to her adventurous life and career. Pat Sheehan is gone but not forgotten, and left a legacy as being one of the most gorgeous, adventurous, and fascinating women in Hollywood.

ABOVE: Pat Sheehan as Miss San Francisco.

RIGHT: Pat Sheehan, Betty MacGowan, and Honey Merrill at The Tropicana Revue (1957).